



# KEYSTONE CONNECTIONS

## From the Desk of Steve Farmer

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Greetings to all!

I hope this finds you all doing well. As I communicate with various faculty and staff members, I am hearing good things. Yes, some of you are struggling, but you expressed appreciation for the support from your supervisors. That was very good to hear. Please know I am keenly aware of the challenges that the pandemic presents for all of us, but we must press on. This too shall pass at some point. Please know I still have an "Open Door" policy and am available via Zoom, VP, and/or email.

Over the past few weeks, I have placed a lot of attention on our faculty and their hard work with distance learning. I still appreciate all their hard work; however, I need to recognize other people that make all this possible:

1. The Business and HR departments at both WPSD and SSDHHC. They are working from home (that is hard given the nature of their work) continuing to pay bills, processing applications, receiving invoices, communicating with staff related to any needs, and so forth. They are the glue that keeps the organization together and running so that we can continue to educate our students.
2. The Maintenance and Housekeeping Departments at both WPSD and SSDHHC have been working to keep buildings and yards clean and looking good. They are critical in keeping our places safe and healthy for our faculty and staff who may need to come on campus to retrieve work or belongings from their offices or classrooms.
3. Our head nurses from WSPD and SSDHHC have been participating in meetings with the administrators to offer suggestions/recommendations in how to make work safe for all our employees when they are on our campuses.
4. Our counseling departments from WPSD and SSDHHC have been working with students and families. I know for a fact that the students and their families truly appreciate the support!
5. Our security officers have been working full time to protect our campuses. I see them walk around campus checking doors, aquariums, and other things. (The other night, security found a big water leak in one of our buildings at WPSD and alerted maintenance).

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## Notes from Scranton

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School is still open! And it is nice to see the diligence, devotion, and perseverance of all of the staff at SSDHHC from taking care of the grounds (Thank you Mr. Townsend, Mr. P. Pronko, Mr. Marquez, Mr. Ives, Mr. Nati, Mr. R. Pronko, Mr. Beagle, Mr. Carey and Mr. Danylak), protecting our campus (Thank you Mr. Konzelman, Mr. Reuther, and Mr. Van Wert), assisting teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators with administrative tasks such as mailings, phone calls, emails, meeting set ups, etc. (Thank you Ms. Munley, Ms. Doran, Ms. Manzano, and Ms. Pientack). We know the school is in good hands with you supporting The Scranton School and having the campus ready for our return.

Teaching and learning is still happening! I had the opportunity to see the kids in lessons this week. I am proud of the work that the teachers and paraprofessionals are doing with our students. A big thank you to all of our teachers (Mr. Almekinder, Ms. Flanagan, Ms. George, Mr. Mantz, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Treat, Ms. Hammer, Ms. Somers, Ms. Pliska, Ms. Wilson, Mr. Heil, Ms. Nati, Ms. Cosgrove, Mr. Hiscox, Ms. B. Campbell (Hershey), Ms. M. Campbell (Hershey)), our paraprofessionals (Ms. Snopek, Mr. King, Mr. Yockey, Ms. Kellachow, Ms. Hubbard, Ms. D'Alessandro, Ms. Waterfield, Ms. Borove, Ms. Hilburn, Ms. Bartholomee (Hershey)), our speech and language teachers (Ms. Arnal, Ms. Errante, Ms. Lukasavage), our residential staff (Ms. Mullally, Ms. Shaulis, Ms. Sims, Mr. Manzano), our nurse (Ms. Butler), our interpreter (Ms. Hart), our counselor (Ms. Bailey), and our contracted staff (Ms. Gregorowicz, Ms. Miller, Dr. Ziegler, Dr. Andrejko, and Dr. Sitkoski) for all you do for our kids.

Providing support, guidance, and planning also continues. A big thank you to our administrators (Ms. Marks, Ms. Ward, Mr. Pettinato, Mr. Boersma, and Mr. Vitale) for communicating with their departments, running IEP meetings, and coordinating/working with everyone to keep programs/school facilities running effectively despite the fact that we are apart.

You are the reason The Scranton School/Hershey Preschool makes a difference for our kids. Thank you.

*---Kevin McDonough*

**Please see an additional note for Scranton staff on page 3.**

## **From the CECO's Corner**

I hope as you are reading this you remain safe and healthy, and counting your blessings - we in the Programs of WPSD do have many blessings to count! Pittsburgh has been in the national news recently because of its stellar health care/research and also its altruism - the Greater Community Food Bank has organized huge donations and distributions at the airport, PPG Paints Arena, and various other locations. They were speakers at one of our Commitment to the Community events several years ago, and are a very worthy cause! Speaking of good news, John Krasinski, from "The Office" and "A Quiet Place" has a YouTube series called "SGN: Some Good News." It's a welcome relief from our daily diet of other news, including CV19. You might want to tune in!

The residential staff were very busy this past week, wearing their PPE and remaining socially distanced, packing and moving residential students' belongings for delivery, storage, shipping, and pick-up. Thank you to Deans Halik and Ennis-Blahut, all the residential staff, all the security staff, Tom Gentile and LionWorks, Nancy Possumato, Walt Czekanski, Barb Manning and the business office staff, and all administration, for assistance in making this collection of many moving parts into a well-oiled machine.

Staff have been mowing through the Public School WORKS trainings! As of Friday, 105 of 247 staff were completely finished! Supervisors will be selecting further trainings from the PSW catalog for staff to complete. Ironically, many of us had just completed the email safety training, so we were able to identify that Dr. Farmer had been "phished," or more specifically, "whaled," in the attempt to get some of us to purchase gift cards! That was timely - and he was right on top of it!

As many have cautioned in their Keystone Connections posts, this quarantine and online learning can result in mental health situations, especially as the time wears on. Many of our webinars are now dealing with this, after a flurry of activity focused on online and distance learning delivery. Please practice self-care and reach out if you or your students are struggling. There are many resources available, and we are all in this together.

---Marybeth Lauderdale

## **From the Academic Team**

Since March 13, we have all made a concerted effort to remotely meet the needs of our students as best we can. Although not preferred, we are pleased with our progress so far in providing academic instruction, counseling, and related services to our students. Many schools and districts are only recently beginning to provide distance learning to their students. The majority of students are being able to meaningfully participate in distance learning. For those students who we are struggling to engage with, we will continue to reach out to them, their families, and their school districts to determine how we can support and engage them.

During this time, it is important that we meet our student's social and emotional needs, as well as their academic needs. We want to thank our counseling department for the support that they have been providing to our most at-risk students. Teachers have also been doing a great job of supporting students and, when necessary, sharing their concerns with the counseling department so that the counselors can then reach out to the students and their families. Many of our students have expressed feeling overwhelmed with distance learning, challenges that their family may be facing, and feeling isolated at their home.

Some teachers still need to earn additional ECA hours and have asked how they can do that during this time. First, please know that the number of required ECA hours has been reduced for all teachers. Instead of being required to earn 36 cumulative hours, that requirement has been reduced to 26 cumulative hours. In addition, all teachers are being given 5 ECA hours for planning and preparing for the transition to distance learning. That means that each teacher must complete at least 21 ECA hours. If you don't know how many ECA hours you already have or you want ideas about how you can earn any remaining ECA hours, then please contact your supervisor.

### **A Note for WPSD Staff**

Please be on the lookout for a Google form survey from us and complete it. This survey will guide our newly established SSDHHC/WPSD Staff Support Committee in developing trainings, scaffold, and activities to help staff get through these COVID times. If you have any questions, please email us at [kbartholow@wpsd.org](mailto:kbartholow@wpsd.org) or [tabraham@wpsd.org](mailto:tabraham@wpsd.org).

Ms. Abraham and Ms. Bartholow

**From the Human Resources/Payroll Departments:**

Please continue to stay safe and healthy and try to find the positives in every day.

**FSA:**

We wanted to remind all staff that part of the [CARES Act](#) (COVID-3 Stimulus Bill) that was recently passed, please know that this Act has reinstated the coverage for Over-the-Counter (OTC) medications and drugs for reimbursement from our FSAs accounts. These items can be purchased with funds from eligible accounts without needing a prescription. If you have any questions regarding this new “temporary” addition to our FSA Account, please do not hesitate to contact Dori Bachar and she can assist with questions or reimbursements.

**Employee Assistance Program:**

Please know that EAP Program, Back on Track, is available to any staff member who needs assistance or has concerns with problems at work or at home that are affecting their daily lives, especially in these uncertain times.

As you may remember, the program provides a confidential helpline (1-800-566-5933). EAP staff are available to listen and provide you with information. You can also learn more about the Back on Track EAP by reviewing the website at [www.backontrackeap.com](http://www.backontrackeap.com). Through the website, you can access an abundance of information on topics such as balancing work and family, eldercare, parenting, budgeting, mental health, and alcohol/drug dependency. To access the website, you will need to use the following information:

*WPSD Staff*

User name: w18200

Password: confidential help

*SSDHHC Staff*

User name: w18700

Password: confidential help

**Payroll:**

If you need to make any changes to your banking information for direct deposits, please email Barb Hancock or Dori Bachar and we will want to follow up with you through a phone conversation due to the increased concerns of on-line fraud.

**Employment Opportunities:**

During distance learning and working remotely, we will be continuing to interview applicants for our open positions via Google Meeting or Zoom Meetings. Our open positions are as follows:

*WPSD Positions:* Teacher, One-on-One Teacher’s Aide position (Children’s Center), Residential Supervisor (Overnight) One-on-One, Housekeeper, Summer maintenance positions - 2 Painters and 4 Laborers; Part-time Audiologist, and Substitute Positions: Teachers, Teacher’s Aide, and Security.

*SSDHHC Positions:* Substitute positions: Teacher, Teacher’s Aide, Nurse and Security.

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**From the Human Resources/Payroll Departments (continued from left):**

*Hershey Positions: Part-time SLP*

\*\*Reminder: Any employees interested in applying for a posted position should complete an internal application, signed by their immediate supervisor, attach an updated resume/application, and forward to the Human Resources Department.

*---Dori Bachar*

**From the Desk of Steve Farmer (continued from page 1)**

(Continued) We have a new security person at SSDHHC – from what I heard, he is doing a great job.

6. Our IT department has been working a lot for the entire organization to ensure our faculty and staff, students, and families get the internet connections they need. That is a HUGE job in itself during this pandemic with everybody working or learning from home!
7. Our Department of Institutional Advancement has been involved in communicating information with students and their families via our websites and social outlets. They continue to work with various stakeholders encouraging them to keep the organization in mind.
8. Our administrative assistants have been busy supporting their departmental supervisors with various tasks. I know I couldn’t do a lot of my work without Judy Taslov’s help!
9. Our residential staff at WPSD have been busy packing and sending out/storing students belongings in the residence. As I write this (Friday), the students’ items are being either shipped via WPSD bus to Bedford and Camp Hill, mailed to parents, or stored on campus.
10. Josh Walterhouse and Hannah Hart have been interpreting many meetings!
11. We have established a newly formed committee – COVID wellness committee consisting of Jackie Bailey, Josiah Mantz, Kathy Bartholow, and Tina Abraham. This committee will focus on offering support for YOU (staff). You should be hearing from them soon.
12. These are the groups of people that help make teaching and learning possible!!!

It is a GREAT honor to work with the Programs of WPSD! We have many dedicated employees and I am truly proud and thankful for each one of you! **Hang in there – keep up the good work!**

*---Steve*

**A Note for SSDHHC Staff**

Please be on the lookout for a Google form survey from us and complete it. This survey will guide our newly established SSDHHC/WPSD Staff Support Committee in developing trainings, scaffolds, and activities, to help staff get through these COVID times. If you have any questions, please email us at [jmantz@thescrantonschool.org](mailto:jmantz@thescrantonschool.org) or [jbailey@thescrantonschool.org](mailto:jbailey@thescrantonschool.org).

*---Ms. Mantz & Ms. Bailey*